

Military icon Oliver North visits 4th ID Ironhorse

Story by Spc. Melissa Walther
367th Mobile Public Affairs
Detachment

TIKRIT – After spending time with Task Force Ironhorse documenting the start of the war, retired Lt. Col. Oliver North returned Nov. 22, to see firsthand how Iraq's reconstruction is progressing.

The former Marine who gained fame as a member of the National Security Council during the Iran-Contra hearings is currently working as a correspondent for FOX News and was in Tikrit to film segments for his 'War Stories' program.

North met with key members of the Task Force Ironhorse's command group. Topics discussed included free enterprise opportunities in Iraq, the state of public works, security, as well as the future of Iraq and the welfare of troops currently deployed.

"I'm here to give fair and balanced coverage of 4th ID," North said of his visit. "I was here covering phase one of the war with the First Marine Expeditionary Force and 4th ID and now I'm back to give it some perspective. That was then. This is now."

Although he had been in Iraq for less than a week, North said he noticed some changes right away compared to the beginning of the war.

"One of the biggest changes is that right after the initial phase of the war the Iraqi people were still very fond of us," said North. "Now, we're seeing much more hostility."

Odierno agreed, saying the new challenge was overcoming the people's fear of Ba'ath party retaliation for aiding the troops.

According to North, that hostility is being met with a capable and well-trained Coalition force.

"What we have going for us is that the quality of the average 19 year old is so much higher than in the past," North said of the soldiers on the ground.

"Just by being here, we're winning the war," North said. "We're here and Saddam's not."

Bridge repair mission brings heavy lifters from local engineer units

Story and photo by
Capt. Jason
Railsback
16th Engineer Battalion

BAGHDAD — The Al-Muthana Bridge in Northern Baghdad is important to the economic vitality of Baghdad and critical to the support of military operations in the city. The northernmost bridge in Baghdad, it supports heavy industrial traffic.

One of the ramps on the bridge had severely deteriorated. A large split in the ramp deck threatened to fail completely or at least damage a vehicle.

Soldiers from the 671st Multi-Role Bridge Company (Oregon National Guard), alongside soldiers from Company C, 16th Engineer Battalion, quickly developed a plan to repair the bridge.

"The 671st Multi-Role Bridge Company helped install the bridge we are repairing back in June," said Lt. Col. John Kem, 16th Engineer Battalion commander. "They were the lead with C Company, 16th (Engineers) for the installation of a bridge across the large canal near Taji back in September."

After a thorough reconnaissance, the 671st convoyed to Camp Anaconda to the "bridge park" to get



Combat engineers from the 671st Multi-role Bridge Company (Oregon National Guard) and soldiers from C Company, 16th Engineer Battalion remove a damaged section of a Mabey-Johnson bridge, known as the Al-Muthana Bridge, Nov. 18. One of the bridge's ramps was severely deteriorated and a large split in the ramp deck threatened to fail completely. As the northernmost bridge in Baghdad, it supports heavy industrial traffic.

the parts needed for repair Nov. 18.

Excited about the mission and ready to start, the soldiers didn't want to wait until the next day to begin work.

Headquarters and First Platoon, Company C, 16th Engineers and the company's maintenance team joined with the 671st to

reestablish a functioning bridge.

Within an hour, 1st Platoon, "Charlie" Company was moving. The 671st provided traffic control and on-site security.

Repairs took place between 9 p.m. and 11 p.m. to minimize traffic disruption. The engineers hauled replacement panels for the bridge ramps and the necessary bolts to the work site. A "contact truck" carried tools and acetylene torches.

Repairs first required using an acetylene torch to cut away damaged decking and deck bolts. Once complete, the two damaged deck panels were removed and replaced.

The repair project allowed the sappers to work on repair techniques, Kem said.

"For example, they had to analyze how to

cut out portions where the bolts were too damaged to remove," he said.

The mission was completely done at night, said Kem. The engineers wanted to get to work quickly.

"Since the repair materials arrived at 7 p.m. they all wanted to start immediately," he said.

"Additionally, doing it at night was better because there was much less traffic so that made the mission easier to control."

"The Al-Muthana Bridge is key to all movements in and out of Baghdad to the north," said 1st Lt. Charles Sleeman, 1st Platoon leader, Company C, 16th Engineer Battalion.

"We, as engineers, will continue to keep this line of communication open day and night and support the good Iraqi people, causing as little disruption as possible to their daily lives," he said.

“*The Al-Muthana bridge is key to all movement in and out of Baghdad to the north.*”

— 1st Lt. Charles Sleeman
16th Engineer Battalion

Party time

82nd troopers share gifts, hearts

Story by Sgt.
Brent M. Williams
49th Public Affairs
Detachment

BAGHDAD — The Iraqi children were shy, staring at the festive decorations adorning the walls of the dining room where the paratroopers awaited their arrival. Hesitant at first, the children's timid faces began to smile.

The children, orphans from the southern village of Al Jebachy, came to Camp Falcon to celebrate the Islamic holiday Ramadan's Feast of Eid Al-Fitr Nov. 26.

The special dinner was arranged by the 407th Forward Support Battalion commander Lt. Col. Jeff Douville and Battalion Chaplain Timothy D. Smith.

"The chaplain and I thought it would be a great idea to celebrate their Ramadan Feast and our Thanksgiving together," Douville said, "particularly with the orphaned children of the village because it is a very lonely time of year for them."

Paratroopers of the 407th FSB, the combat support battalion for the 82nd Airborne Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team, played host at the feast, serving hamburgers and spaghetti with meatballs and fruit, cake and ice cream to their special guests.

"The soldiers really enjoy being



Paratrooper Spc. Dedra Collier, Headquarters and Co. A, 407th Forward Support Battalion, offers a young Iraqi girl a bowl of ice cream during their Eid Al-Fitr celebration Nov 26.

Photo by Spc. Jason B. Baker, 49th PAD

around the children this time of year because it reminds them of family," Douville said.

Traditionally, Iraqi parents give their children special gifts to celebrate the holiday festivities; however, these children, many of whom lost their parents in what the Iraqi people call the "Saddam Wars" of the late 1980s and 1990s, normally go without, said Smith.

This year has marked a change for the children and the village on many levels, said Maj. Bob Merkel, executive officer of the 407th FSB.

The village of Jebachy, a rural

stretch of land south of Al Rashid District in Baghdad, is home to more than 2,000 Iraqis, including the more than 70 orphans. In the time since the 2nd BCT arrived in Baghdad in May, the 407th has taken responsibility for the village, working to renovate the neglected hamlet.

Working closely with the village's mayor, Musa Humadi Dawood, and leaders of the forward support battalion repaired schools, water-pumping stations and roadways and took on other special projects to help rebuild the impoverished area, said Douville. It was during this time that the mayor introduced the orphans to the battalion's commander and chaplain.

"We wanted to do something special for these orphans," Chaplain Smith said, "because we know the day following the end of Ramadan is a feast day, and in a regular family, the mother and father would have gifts for their children."

After the meal, the combat support soldiers of Task Force Falcon delivered gifts of soccer balls and baby dolls, coloring books and crayons to the children.

"It's nice to interact with the children and get to know the people of Iraq," said Spc. Joseph Casey,

mechanic, Company B, 407th FSB. "It makes you feel like we're actually making progress here."

The children, unable to hide their smiles, hurriedly received the presents, gifts that came as the result of donations from families back at Fort Bragg, N.C.

Under the guidance and direction of Smith, the 407th's Family Readiness Group is promoting a program called "Operation Iraqi Family."

The FRG collects donations of clothes, shoes, and other needed items not only for the

Iraqi orphans but also for the poor, elderly, handicapped and widowed in Iraq.

Currently, the battalion receives the donations of money, clothes, shoes and other items through the mail service at their Army Post Office address.

The battalion's webpage, www.407fsb.com, carries details about Operation Iraqi Family and the 65 Iraqi families it supports.

"It leaves a message for the Iraqi people in Jebachy and our soldiers," Smith said, "... that Americans truly care about them by showing and sharing their lives."

The battalion plans to bring packages to the needy families in Al-Jebachy and hopes to bring the children back to Camp Falcon for another special meal around Christmas, said Smith.

"It shows the community that we care," said 407th FSB Command Sgt. Maj. Ronald DeVega, "that there is another side to us. We have families as well. We are here with open arms, and we're giving at the same time."

The event ended with the battalion chaplain leading the soldiers and their guests in a prayer for peace and happiness.

"It leaves a message for the Iraqi people in Jebachy and our soldiers ... that Americans truly care about them by showing and sharing their lives."

— Chaplain Timothy D. Smith
Battalion chaplain

Multi cultures celebrate holidays in ancient city

Story by Spc. Mary Rose Xenikakis
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

HATRA — Soldiers, local patrons and international media danced to traditional dances, sang customary songs and ate a feast of both American and Iraqi food in Hatra as the sun went down on the ancient city.

The celebrations ended the Ramadan season and brought in the Christmas season Dec. 6. Events throughout the evening included a presentation from Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, commanding general of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and Hatra's mayor, Nofil Hamade Sultan, and a dinner with seasonal music and slide show, which ended the festivities of the evening.

The evening at the Hatra ruins was a celebration to show the friendship and the working relationship between the Iraqis of Hatra and the Coalition forces, according to Petraeus.

"A few months ago in the city I watched a citi-

zen from Hatra present the first brass canister, of many, from the Jaguar Ammunition Point. The brass was sold and the money was used to purchase supplies for the schools in the districts," Petraeus said. "That project has now grown into the Hatra Brass Recovery Company, a private company owned by Iraqis.

"This company and many efforts like it throughout Ninevah province and all of Iraq demonstrate what is possible when everyone works together."

With all the participants in the celebrations sitting at tables throughout the courtyard of the ruins the mayor also gave a presentation to those who

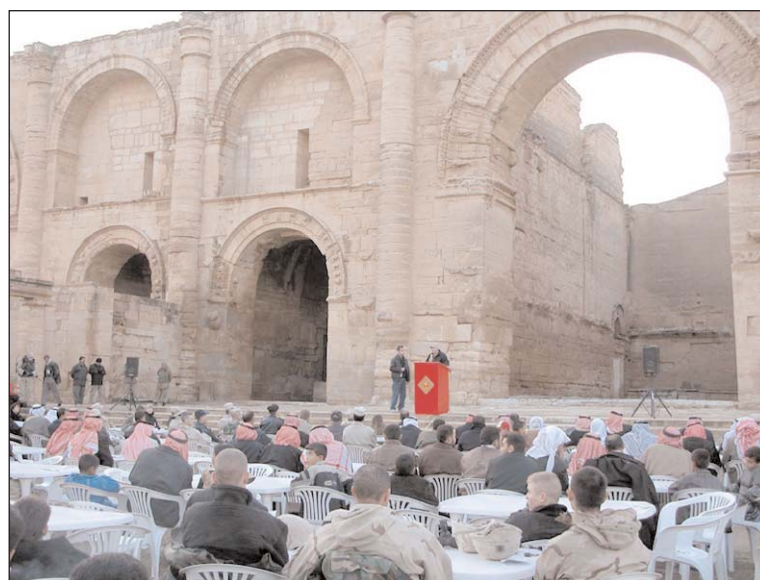


Photo by Capt. Scott Himes

Soldiers and residents of Hatra listen to speakers during a multi-cultural celebration in this city built in 300 B.C.

have helped in making the festivities possible.

"I give thanks to the soldier's effort for making Hatra better and better everyday. We hope to continue this for a new and better Iraq," said Nofil.

Tallil Air Base Chapel Worship Services

Worship is at the 332nd AEW Chapel, unless otherwise noted.

Catholic

Daily Mass: Monday through Friday, 6 p.m.

Vigil Mass: Saturday, 6 p.m.

Confessions: 5 to 5:40 p.m. in the Blessed Sacrament Room

Sunday Mass: 8 a.m.

POC: Chaplain Eugene Theisen, 459-0038

Protestant

Noon Prayer/Praise: Monday through Friday, 11 to 11:15 a.m.

Lutheran/Episcopal Communion: Saturday, 7:30 p.m.

Traditional: Sunday, 9:30 a.m.

Liturgical Communion: Sunday, 10:35 to 11:15 a.m. Gospel

Service: Sunday, 11:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Contemporary, *non-denominational*: Sunday, 7 p.m.

POC: Chaplain Rodger Ericson, 459-0038

Latter Day Saints

Lay-Led Service: Sunday, 2 p.m.

POC: Staff Sgt Hager, 573-1107

Jewish

Lay-Led Service: Friday, 8 p.m.

POC: Chaplain Ericson, 459-0038

Muslim

(LSA Adder Chapel) Prayer: 12:30 p.m. and sunset daily

Bible Studies

Women's: Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. (chapel)

Men's: Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. (chapel annex)

Catholic (RCIA): Thurs, 6:30 p.m. (chapel annex)

Catholic: Sunday, 6:30 and 7:30 p.m. (chapel annex)

Men and Women: Thursday, 7:30 p.m. (chapel annex)

LDS Study: Thursday, 7:30 p.m. (chapel annex)

Chaplain Led: Saturday, 6 p.m. (chapel annex)

Hair today, gone tomorrow

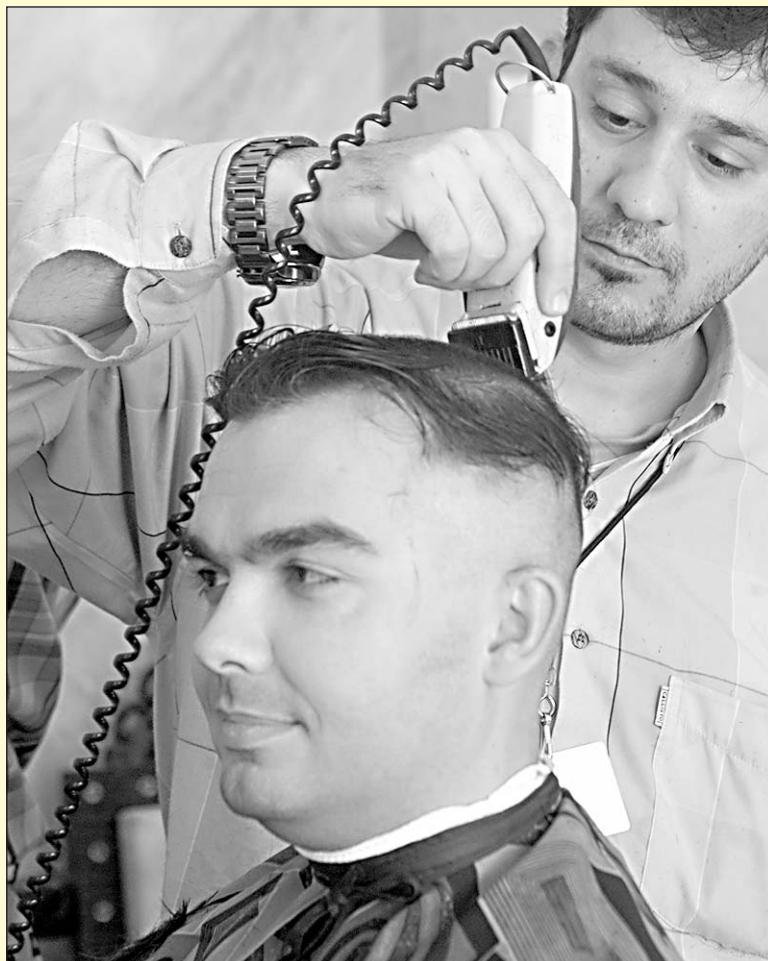


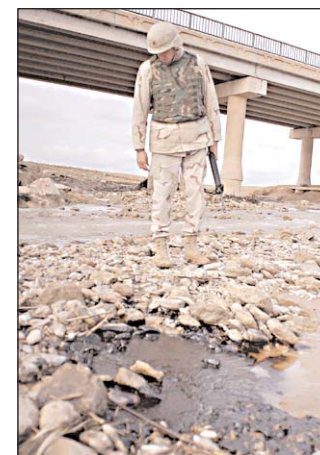
Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Ken Hudson/319th MPAD

Mr. Simon Cholerton gets his hair cut off after telling his friends that, "it would take \$500 to persuade me to cut my hair like a U.S. Marine." In fact, his friends contributed \$700 which will be donated to the Uganda Society for Disabled Children. Information on the charity can be found at: www.charitynet.org/~usdc/

Cholerton has just completed a six month tour as policy adviser to the Coalition deputy commander in Baghdad.



Soldiers from the 877th Engineer Battalion, attached to the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), lower a 12-inch diameter pipe into a creek as part of the dam they're constructing to keep oil out of the Tigris.



Maj. John Gossett, chemical officer with the 926th Engineer Group, attached to the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), checks for pockets of oil in an intermittent creek bed that flows into the Tigris River. The oil came from a ruptured pipeline 15 kilometers north of the river.



A soldier with the 877th Engineer Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), uses an excavator to make space for a dam to be built by the engineers.

“Everyone agrees that this is the best alternative for preventing oil from reaching the Tigris.”

*— Maj. Scott Vick
926th Engineer Group*

Oil and water don't mix: Engineer efforts keep 'em separated

Story and photos by Spc. Joshua Hutcheson
40th Public Affairs Detachment

MOSUL – American engineers in northern Iraq are using their skills to keep the water flowing into the houses of the people of the city of Mosul and keep the oil out.

In October, a crude oil pipe running ruptured, spilling an “unknown quantity” of oil into a dry creek bed 15 kilometers above the Tigris River, said Maj. Scott Vick, group plans officer, 926th Engineer Group, attached to the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).

The Tigris is the source of water for millions of people in northern Iraq.

The oil pooled in the creek bed until Thanksgiving weekend when large torrents of rain created an intermittent creek, flushing much of the oil into the Tigris, Vick said.

The oil was sucked into the intake duct filters at the nearby water treatment plant.

The crude clogged the system and forced the workers of the plant to temporary shut it down,

said Maj. John Gossett, a chemical officer with the 926th Engineer Group.

The treatment plant is the source of clean water for Mosul and the surrounding region. Shutting down the plant, even temporary, affected food preparation and people's ability to drink and bathe.

Cleaning oil out of the water tanks was a complicated job, Gossett said. Because the treatment plant was built based on an old design, the water tanks are made of concrete.

Oil soaked into the concrete and made the scrubbing process more difficult, he said.

To keep that incident from repeating, engineers attached to the 101st built a dam to keep the water from being contaminated again, Vick said.

Using their own construction equipment and with supplies provided by the Mosul government, engineers from the 926th Engineer Group and 877th Engineer Battalion were able to build a dam in two days.

“Everyone agrees that this is the best alternative to prevent oil from reaching the Tigris,”

Vick said.

The dam was built using three 12-inch diameter pipes placed on the creek bottom, then rocks no larger the 16 inches were dropped on top of the pipes.

Because oil floats on top of water, the rocks will collect the crude and keep it from going any farther. The water will be able to flow through the submerged pipes, Vick said.

The engineers coordinated with Task Force RIO to get equipment and supplies to clean the creek. More than \$98,000 is to be spent on absorbent booms and pads to stop the oil, skimmers to get the oil out of the water, four sets of protective suits for the people who will work to clean the Tigris and other tools to treat the water, Vick said.

“This will be the only source of petroleum remediation equipment in northern Iraq,” Vick said.

Crude oil flow through the ruptured pipe was halted in October, shortly after the break. It is not known when flow will be resumed.